



NECCOG

Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

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Results through Regionalism

Testimony to the

Transportation Committee

Regarding

Raised Bill 5256, An Act Studying the Consolidation of Local and Regional Transit Districts

March 7, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to you today in **support** of Raised Bill 5256, An Act Studying the Consolidation of Local and Regional Transit Districts. My name is John Filchak. I am the Executive Director of both the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) and the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District (NECTD) - which, while a separate entity, is a regional program administered by NECCOG. We support this study because we believe that the improvement in the delivery, efficiency and scope of public transit can benefit from such study.

We are, however, concerned that the legislation starts on a premise that the consolidation of public transit operations will result in "improving regional transportation options and increasing efficiencies." Perhaps. While consolidation may well be part of the answer - we would argue that the application of regionalism would be a more appropriate and productive path for such a study.

As stated, NECTD is a regional program administered by NECCOG. NECCOG is one of nine regional councils of governments in Connecticut and has 16 member towns located in northeastern Connecticut. Our organization is committed to finding ways to assist our towns through the application of regionalism. Regionalism is often confused with an attempt to reinvent counties or to remove local control. That is wrong. Regionalism at its core is the result of voluntary collaboration by and between municipalities that recognize that they are more likely to achieve their interests by working together than by acting independently. This is precisely what NECCOG and the other regional councils of governments do for our member municipalities.

NECCOG currently provides a range of regional programs for our towns including: paramedic intercept services, economic development, land use planning, transportation planning/project assistance, engineering, property revaluation, election assistance, GIS, grant writing/management - including ARPA administration and animal control for twenty towns. We additionally, since 1998, have provided all administrative services for the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District - one of 11 public bus operations not operated by CT transit. This has resulted in an administratively efficient and cost effective operation. In short, NECTD is a prime example of how regionalism works.

NECCOG suggests that this study also examine the relationship of non-profit and municipal-based transportation to the transit services currently offered by our transit districts. Connecticut has a

significant number of “wheels on the road” - but not anywhere near the coordination needed to maximize efficiencies in terms of service and costs of operations. Additionally, as a region that borders Rhode Island and Massachusetts and in close proximity to the second and third largest cities (Worcester and Providence) in New England - this study should further examine the intrastate connectivity that our residents and businesses need.

Finally, we strongly suggest that the study include the participation of the regional councils of governments as a resource. The nine regional COGs each has a common planning responsibility for transportation - including transit. Each has in-house transportation planning professionals that can provide value to the study and context to the services now provided and changes to those services. We believe this is a value-added resource available to the study and one that should be utilized.

Thank you for your consideration of our remarks. We are ready to provide whatever additional details we can to ensure the success of this legislation and the resulting study.

For more information, please contact:

John Filchak
NECCOG Executive Director
john.filchak@neccog.org
860-774-1253, ext. 14